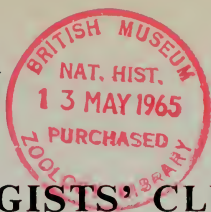


BULLETIN

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The six hundred and twenty-fifth meeting of the Club was held at the Rembrandt Hotel, London, on the 20th April, 1965.

Chairman: Major-General C. B. Wainwright

Members present 20; Guests 7.

Mr. Philip Wayre showed his film entitled "Wind in the Reeds" which depicts fauna and flora of the Norfolk Broads.

A constant mutant Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus* L.

by J. S. ASH

Received 14th January, 1965

Through the courtesy of Mr. C. L. Coles I have recently been able to examine the body of a Wood Pigeon shot by Mr. E. B. Marriage near Christchurch, Hants, on 22nd December 1964. This bird showed such an unusual pattern of aberrant plumage coloration, apparently similar to that of a bird observed by the writer in the field at Damerham, Hants, in 1956 and 1958, that it seems worthwhile putting both occurrences on record.

1. Dead bird (female), 22nd December 1964: whole of top of head grey-blue, slightly paler than normal, some feathers above eye and on forehead with pale buff tips; throat, cheeks and ear-coverts paler, tinged buffish-pink; extensive white neck patch extending and meeting at back, each feather being pale grey at its base and having a median transverse deep pinkish-buff bar and broad dirty white tip; only a suggestion of metallic green on tips of some neck feathers at base of white neck patch.

Upper back deep pinkish- (mauvish- at some angles) buff, becoming more buff on middle back; mid-back to upper tail-coverts, pale greyish-blue; outer upper tail-coverts speckled and deeply fringed pale buff; breast as upper back; rest of under parts normal except under tail-coverts which were finely speckled pale buff. Rectrices dark grey; primaries dark grey with white leading edges and deep buff tips on 5th-9th; secondaries grey, speckled buff; tertials similar but more speckled buff; primary coverts and bastard wing blackish-brown with broad deep buff tips; the outer greater coverts and adjoining lesser coverts (the white "flash" on a normal bird) were pale grey finely speckled with buff; inner greater coverts

grey, speckled and broadly tipped with buff; lesser coverts and scapulars pale grey, broadly fringed deep pinkish-buff. One replaced primary and two replaced secondaries were of normal colour.

Tarsi deep red; claws pale horn with dark grey bases and dark upper central streak on some. The bill was finer than type from the nares to tip, deep vinous-red shading to grey at tip and resembling that of a Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* in colour and general shape, though not in size. The flesh round the eye was deep red giving the bird the appearance of an orbital ring, again reminiscent of *S. turtur*.

Measurements: weight 468.6 gms.; wing 238 mm.; tail 149 mm., tarsus 33.5 mm.; bill 27 mm. from base of skull to tip, 21.5 mm. from base of feathers to tip (*palumbus* averages 22 mm.), width at base 10 mm., width at nares 6.5 mm. Wing formula: 4th primary longest; 3rd 7 mm. shorter; 2nd 12 mm. shorter; 5th and 6th 24 mm. and 42 mm. shorter. On the right side, the 4th rectrice extended for *ca.* 25 mm. beyond the other and was *ca.* 10 mm. wider at its widest point than its corresponding member on the left side.

2. Live bird, 5th and 7th March, 1956: watched feeding during afternoon in grass field with other normal birds with which it was compared: rump and head slightly paler blue grey; neck patch white and twice as extensive, probably extending as narrow band round back of neck; rest of upper parts and wing-coverts delicate pinkish-brown; breast, slightly darker than former; no sign of white "flash" in flight or at rest; when flying wing showed a dark and light contrast as in a Stock Dove (*Columba oenas*). When disturbed it always flew off alone and did not join the circling flock of normal birds, although it joined them when feeding. What was presumed to be the same bird was again seen in the same field on 5th March 1958; on this occasion the wing "flash" was noted as being discernable as a faintly greyish area.

This mutant is of interest for several reasons. Firstly, it is apparently a constant mutant in so far as two apparently similar individuals were involved, and secondly the changes in colour of the plumage are complex. Based on the descriptions given by Harrison (1963) there appears to be some dilution (or chlorochroism) of a non-eumelanic nature of the normal grey plumage, but whether this is true dilution as defined by Rensch (1925) or due to schizochroism, which results in the loss of a pigment, cannot be ascertained. The appearance of pinkish and buff shades may be due to either of the above causes or to a degree of erythrism. A surprising feature is the increase in the extent of the white neck patches and the loss of the white wing flashes. A final explanation of this interesting aberration will depend on a better understanding of the pigment structure of the Wood Pigeon and the genetical factors governing it.

References:

- Harrison, C. J. O. (1963): Grey and fawn variant plumages. *Bird Study*, 10: 219-233.
Rensch, B. (1925): Die forberaberration der Vogel. *Journ. f. Orn.*, 73: 514-539.

Comments on the mutant Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*

by R. K. MURTON

I now have in my possession the aberrant Wood Pigeon shot near Christchurch, Hants, on 22nd December 1964 which was described above